

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000020

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV, DRL
COMMERCE FOR ITA JEAN KELLY
USPACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/04/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [BM](#) [NLD](#)

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION CALLS FOR "CLEAN SLATE," SPDC THREATENS
"LEGAL ACTION"

REF: A. 04 RANGOON 1628

[1](#)B. 04 RANGOON 1563

Classified By: CDA a.i. Ron McMullen for Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Democratic opposition groups held their annual January 4th Independence Day celebrations despite a negative SPDC response to a December demand for dialogue before the holiday. The observances were well attended and seem to indicate a unity of purpose among the different groups. With the opposition's private threat of forming a parallel government and the SPDC's public threat of legal action looming, we will see if this unity of purpose leads to unity of action. End summary.

The SPDC Responds to Ultimatum

[1](#)2. (SBU) To mark Burma's 57th Independence Day on January 4th, the SPDC issued its usual statements about unity, the importance of the military's role, and the necessity to march towards "a modern, developed, and discipline-flourishing democratic nation with the seven step policy." It also issued a response, through a planted article in the January 5-11 edition of newspaper "The Flower News," to a December 2, 2004 NLD ultimatum to Senior General Than Shwe (ref B) to begin a dialogue with the NLD by January 4th, "or else." The ultimatum noted that the Committee Representing the People's Parliament (CRPP) -- a loose consultative group of opposition groups -- had endorsed the NLD's position.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The SPDC response was predictably dismissive. The article accused the NLD once again of "destructionist" tactics and of threatening to use the "outlawed" CRPP as "a weapon." It continued by noting the SPDC had generously allowed the CRPP to exist despite its legal status, but that the regime would have no choice but to take legal action "at any time" if the CRPP and NLD moved to form a parallel government (ref A). Furthermore, the article asserted, the "People would never accept" such a move.

Opposition Reiterates Call for Dialogue

[1](#)4. (SBU) The NLD and the Veteran Politicians group held their separate annual Independence Day events as scheduled. The NLD marked the holiday at its headquarters in Rangoon. A crowd of perhaps 200 members attended the function, packing the dilapidated building and spilling out onto the sidewalk and street. NLD Secretary U Lwin gave a keynote address that was moderate to gentle in tone. The NLD and allied parties' ultimatum to the SPDC, and the regime's indirect and negative response produced no follow-on call for action. Six diplomatic missions attended the NLD event (United States, Australia, Japan, the U.K., France, and Germany). After the function diplomats spontaneously lined up for a group pose for the bevy of Military Intelligence paparazzi engaged in a snapping frenzy across the street. The NLD crowd roared with laughter and applauded the move.

[1](#)5. (SBU) The Veteran Politicians, the remaining elders from the original independence movement and first (and last) democratic government in the 1950s, held a similar event across town with speeches on the history of Burma's independence movement -- both pre and post-1948. The keynote address publicly endorsed the NLD/CRPP position that a "clean slate" and open dialogue between the government and the democratic parties were needed to break the political deadlock. Despite the large crowd in attendance, the United States was the only diplomatic mission to send a representative -- much to the excitement of the three still and one video photographer sent by MI.

Comment: Unity of Purpose, But Little Leverage

[1](#)6. (C) Despite no inclination from the SPDC to sit down with the NLD, the Independence Day events, particularly the Veteran Politicians' ceremony, appeared to signify a new unity of purpose to push the regime for dialogue. Both observances were better attended than in previous years by the various opposition "factions:" the NLD leadership, the more aggressive NLD youth movement, as well as ethnic political leaders. With the deadline passed for a positive

SPDC response to the ultimatum, and with the threat of "legal action" looming, we will see if this apparent unity of purpose engenders unity of action. End comment.
McMullen